



# 2022 BCALA Best of the Best Booklist

5<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

## ***The Door of No Return***

**by Kwame Alexander**

In this novel in verse, Kwame tells the adventure of 11 year old Kofi, who lives in a village in Upper Kwanta with his loving family. Although he was warned not to go to the river at night, he does. Thus begins a wild adventure that will carry Kwame over land and sea.

## ***Isaiah Dunn Saves the Day***

**by Kelly J. Baptist**

In this sequel to the award-winning *Isaiah Dunn is My Hero*, things seem to be going well for Isaiah. He and his little sister, Charlie, are getting used to staying with Miz Rita, and Mama's feeling better. Isaiah's poetry business with Angel is taking off, and his best friend, Sneaky, always has a new hustle. Plus, Isaiah has his dad's journals for a story or if he needs advice. Starting middle school is hard. Kobe, Isaiah's mentee, won't stop making trouble. Isaiah knows something is up, but to get to the bottom of Kobe's secret, he'll have to rely on every hero he knows—including himself.

## ***Caprice***

**by Coe Booth**

Twelve-year old Caprice is experiencing the growing pains of adolescence, adjusting to a new school, relationships, and her changing sense of self. But when her grandmother falls seriously ill, memories of a traumatic event in her past, one that divided her family, rise up again. Although deeply conflicted and afraid, Caprice makes the choice to speak her truth, even if others aren't ready to hear it.

## ***Unfadeable***

**by Maurice Broaddus**

The young Bella "Unfadeable" Fades has two main goals: staying out of trouble and making art. Unfortunately, this can be tough to pull off since her art is graffiti, and it's made even harder by the fact that she lives on her own. But when Bella learns of a conspiracy to defund her community, she has no choice but to get into some proverbial good trouble. This middle-grade novel is a satisfying blend of mystery and social activism.

## ***Summertime with Lizzie B. Hayes (Second Edition)***

**by K. P. Carter**

Eight-year-old Lizzie B. Hayes can't wait to kick off a summer of nonstop fun with all the other kids. But this summer is different! Just as Lizzie gears up for jump-rope contests, shooting hoops, trips to the library, and roller skating, she begins to hear rumors of trouble brewing in her city. To make matters worse, Lizzie's father plans to take her on a two week vacation down south—South Philadelphia, that is. Now she is faced with leaving everyone she loves for the first time, and when she comes back, everything has changed. Set during the summer of 1967, *Summertime with Lizzie B. Hayes* follows an array of amusingly lovable characters as they live through one of the most turbulent times in the country's history.



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## ***Swim Team***

**by Johnnie Christmas**

Bree is beyond excited to start middle school as a Mighty Manatee—that is, until she finds out the only elective that fits her schedule is Swim 101, a big problem for someone with a fear of swimming. As luck would have it, she finds the perfect coach in Etta, her elderly neighbor who happened to be a swim team captain in her day. This engaging graphic novel is an inspiring sports story that explores the history of aquaphobia among African Americans.

## ***Rain Rising***

**by Courtne Comrie**

When her older brother suffers a near-fatal beating from members of an all-White fraternity, thirteen-year-old Rain Washington's struggle with depression goes from bad to worse. Her emotional health is in dire straits when her favorite teacher invites her to join a group of students who support each other in after school counseling sessions. Written in dazzling verse, this novel tells a somber yet inspiring story of healing.

## ***Evicted: The Struggle for the Right to Vote***

**by Alice Faye Duncan, ill. Charly Palmer**

In this absorbing collection of profiles—including of parents and children, farmers, students, and the ghost of a lynched Black man, Thomas Brooks—Duncan illuminates the grassroots Fayette County Tent City Movement in late-1950s Tennessee, which opposed racial terror aimed at Black voters and eventually helped lead to the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Palmer's abstract spreads, rendered in surreal-colored acrylic, offer mesmerizing visual accompaniment. An empathic tribute that will resonate amid present-day conversations about voter suppression. Back matter includes a timeline and author's and illustrator's notes.

## ***If You Read This***

**by Kereen Getten**

Jillian has always done everything she can to keep from standing out, even when that means bottling up her real thoughts and personality. Ironically, the fifth-grade class competition that may finally bring her out of her shell is an egg-hatching project. This delightful novel for young readers is packed with heart, science, and fun.

## ***The Lucky Ones***

**by Linda Williams Jackson**

Growing up poor in 1960's Mississippi, Ellis Earl Brown has learned not to expect too much in life. This is why he's so skeptical to learn a famous senator is coming to visit the Delta; however, with inspiration from the story of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Ellis decides to hold out hope for a brighter tomorrow. His tenacity seems to be duly rewarded when he and his family are among those chosen to welcome Senator Robert Kennedy at the airport.



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## ***Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round***

**by Kathlyn J. Kirkwood, ill. Steffi Walthall**

This memoir-in-verse tells the moving story of how a nation learned to celebrate a hero. Through years of protests and petition, Kathlyn's story highlights the foot soldiers who fought to make Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday a national holiday.

## ***In the Key of Us***

**by Mariama Lockington**

Following her mother's death, rising eighth grader Andrea "Andi" Byrd is missing the trust and independence her artist mother afforded her. Living in a new town with her Aunt Janine and Uncle Mark, who are expecting their first child, Andi feels like she's in the way of their growing family, and has lost the magic she once felt when playing the trumpet. When her aunt and uncle suggest she attend a prestigious summer music camp—with uniforms, a no-cellphone policy, and mostly White campers—she's sure that going will be a mistake.

## ***Freewater***

**by Amina Luqman-Dawson**

Under the cover of night, twelve-year-old Homer flees Southerland Plantation with his little sister Ada, unwillingly leaving their beloved mother behind. As much as he adores her and fears for her life, Homer knows there's no turning back—not with the overseer on their trail. Through tangled vines, secret doorways, and over a sky bridge, the two find a secret community called Freewater, deep in the swamp. In this society of formerly enslaved people and freeborn children, Homer finds new friends, almost forgetting where he came from. But when he learns of a threat that could destroy Freewater, he crafts a plan to find his mother and help his new home.

## ***And We Rise: The Civil Rights Movement in Poems***

**by Erica Martin**

In stunning verse and vivid use of white space, Erica Martin's debut poetry collection walks readers through the Civil Rights Movement by retelling well-documented events that shaped the nation's treatment of Black people, and spotlighting lesser-known figures and moments that were just as crucial to the Movement and our nation's centuries-long fight for justice and equality.

## ***The Whisperers Warning Secrets of Oscuros***

**by Danielle Y. C. McLean**

Twelve year old JV has discovered that he's one of a select few entrusted with preserving the balance between the world's natural and unnatural realms and is now more driven than ever to know who his birth parents are. But there's another mystery in the usually quiet village of Alcavere that he can't ignore. He and his friends, Carol and Riaz, have received a cryptic warning from a supernatural being who dwells in the Oscuros Forest, launching them into a high-stakes mission. Can they solve the riddle and protect a villager from the foretold doom before time runs out?



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## ***Maybe an Artist: A Graphic Novel***

**by Liz Montague**

A graphic memoir providing a youthful voice amidst a soft palette of colors and expressive art depicting one woman's journey to breaking the glass ceiling. Liz Montague uses graphic artistry to overcome obstacles of dyslexia, racism, and gender discrimination as she artfully reveals her life story in stages, embraced by humor and social commentary.

## ***We Were the Fire***

**by Shelia P. Moses**

Rufus Jackson Jones is from Birmingham, the place Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. called the most segregated in the country. A place that, in 1963, is full of civil rights activists, including Dr. King himself. The adults are trying to get more attention to their cause—to show that separate is not equal. Rufus's dad works at the local steel factory, and his mom is a cook at the mill. If they participate in marches, their bosses will fire them. So that's where the kids decide they will come in; nobody can fire them. So on a bright May morning in 1963, Rufus and his buddies join thousands of other students to peacefully protest in a local park. There they are met with policemen and firemen who turn their powerful hoses on them. Rufus then realizes that they are the fire. And they will not be put out.

## ***Operation Sisterhood***

**by Olugbemisola, Rhuday-Perkovich**

Middle-schooler Bo and her mother have always been close, bonding over their love for food and enjoying their time together in their little Bronx apartment. But when Bo's mother announces her engagement to her boyfriend Bill, Bo is uprooted from her neighborhood to Bill's brownstone in Harlem. Bill, who owns his own bookstore, also has a daughter of his own, as well as housemates with twin girls. As Bo struggles with the coming changes (including personality differences with Bill's daughter, Sunday) she also learns how to make her own place in this new family, as well as her new community.

## ***Black Panther Uprising***

**by Roland L. Smith**

The final installment of the Young Prince trilogy, thirteen-year-old T'Challa is back in Wakanda—back to his training, his family, and the comforts of home. And he is surprised to find himself missing his friends so soon after his recent time in America. His friends come for a surprise visit and they are introduced to the wonders of Wakanda. However, the mysterious, terrifying Originators are unleashed from the kingdom's past and T'Challa needs to save his parents and his nation.

## ***Shuri: A Black Panther Novel—Symbiosis***

**by Nic Stone**

The royal palace of Wakanda is one of, if not the most, secure facilities on this planet—or any other. So the anxiety Shuri feels when she's jolted out of sleep by the queen mother with the news that someone attempted to break into the palace—and succeeded—is significant. And as quickly as they broke in, they vanished. The search for this interloper, a mysterious "symbiote" with superhuman speed and strength, will lead Shuri to the Jabari Lands, a remote, unforgiving part of the country she has never seen. And what she discovers will be more shocking than she could have imagined.



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## ***Lotus Bloom and the Afro Revolution***

**by Sherri Winston**

The only thing bigger than Lotus Bloom's afro is her flamboyant personality. The talented twelve-year-old violinist is excited to be starting school at an arts academy, but is unpleasantly surprised when the administration claims her hair is a dress code violation. Not usually the type to rock the boat, Lotus will need the help of her socially conscious best friend Rebel to fight back against racist school rules.

## ***When Winter Robeson Came***

**by Brenda Woods**

In a rhythmic historical novel in verse, Woods explores the Watts Riots of August 1965. Two cousins, Los Angeles native 12 year old Eden Louise Coal looks forward to two weeks of fun with her Mississippi cousin 13 year old Winter Robeson. However, their experiences during the Watts Riot leaves a long-last impression that may be far from fun.

## ***Star Child: A Biographical Constellation of Octavia Butler***

**by Ibi Zoboi**

Zoboi explores the early years of Octavia Butler's fascinating life by weaving together quotes from Butler, prose passages from historical and biographical information, and Zoboi's own original poetry.